



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA ADMINISTRATOR TO JOIN FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON AT SOUTH AMERICAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCES

SANTIAGO, Chile – U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Aida Alvarez will join First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at a historic gathering of first ladies from 24 countries in the Western Hemisphere.

The first ladies' summit, which is being held this week in Santiago, Chile, will focus on ways for women in the Western Hemisphere to work together to find solutions to today's social issues and problems.

Under the theme "The Americas Pave Today the Way for the Year 2000," Mrs. Clinton and Administrator Alvarez will discuss ways to support and promote social policies that foster democracy, fight poverty and make progress toward economic stability and social justice in the Americas.

"We recognize that our societies are becoming increasingly global," said Administrator Alvarez. "This globalization poses new challenges and offers new opportunities for our countries. It is important that we come together, pool our abilities, share our visions and work toward economic stability and social justice for all the people of the Americas."

Mrs. Clinton and Administrator Alvarez will also visit Montevideo, Uruguay, to participate in the "Vital Voices of the Americas: Women in Democracy" conference. The Montevideo conference, which follows two other successful conferences in Vienna, Austria, in July 1997 and this month in Belfast,

Northern Ireland, will bring together more than 400 women from Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada and the U.S. to highlight the role of women in strengthening democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The purpose of the conference is to build global networks and forge partnerships among women worldwide. Administrator Alvarez will play a key role at the conference as leader of the Economic Integration and Business Growth workshop. The conference will also include sessions on law and leadership, and politics and public life.

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A highlight of the conference will be a demonstration of the SBA's Online Women's Business Center (**Error! Bookmark not defined.**) in both English and Spanish. Launched in January 1998, the Online Women's Business Center is a training-and-counseling website that offers virtually everything a woman needs to start and build a successful business. The site includes a full business-training curriculum, mentoring, individual counseling, topic forums and newsgroups, market research, information on all of the SBA's programs and services, and a comprehensive new state-by-state *Resource Guide*, plus links to countless other sites and resources.

Kessler, Secretary for the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises of the Republic of Argentina (SEPYME). In April, SBA and SEPYME joined in a Buenos Aires, Administrator Alvarez will join Secretary Kessler in meeting U.S. and Argentinean small opportunities in both countries.

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The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

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